

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
OF LAND OFF  
OLDWOOD ROAD,  
TENBURY WELLS,  
WORCESTERSHIRE



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Worcestershire Archaeology  
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## **An archaeological evaluation of land off Oldwood Road, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire**

Graham Arnold, Michael Nicholson and Tom Vaughan

With a contribution by Robert Hedge

### **Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land off Oldbury Road, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire (NGR SO 592 677). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client, who intends to develop the site for residential use, for which a planning application has been granted.

The site, currently a pasture field, lies to the south-west of Tenbury Wells, on high ground above the flood plain of the River Teme, with potential for prehistoric and later settlement activity due to its location on a gravel river terrace.

A geophysical survey of the site had identified anomalies which had the potential to represent archaeological features. Four trenches were located in the south of the site to test the presence and nature of these anomalies and determine their validity.

No significant archaeological deposits, structures or artefacts were revealed. The only features and deposits found were 18<sup>th</sup> century stone land drains, a backfilled or silted up natural depression, an undated plough scar and two tree root bowls. There was no evidence for the possible enclosure tentatively identified through geophysical survey. Some of the anomalies noted in the survey may relate to the plough scar observed in Trench 4 and the land drains in Trenches 1 and 2.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land off Oldwood Road, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire (NGR SO 592 677). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of their client, who intends to develop the site for residential use for which a planning application has been granted by Malvern Hills District Council (MH/14/00006/REM).

The proposed development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application.

The project follows a geophysical survey, undertaken in March 2014 (Stratascan 2014).

The project conforms to the standard evaluation brief and proposal for Worcestershire (WCC 2014; WA 2014). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010). The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WSM 57555.

### 2 Aims

The aims of this evaluation are:

- to describe and assess the significance of the heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to establish the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological site;
- to assess the impact of the application on the archaeological site.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Personnel

The fieldwork was led by Tom Rogers (BA, MSc). The report was prepared by Michael Nicholson (BSc), Graham Arnold (BA, MSc) and Tom Vaughan (BA MA AlfA). The project managers responsible for the quality of the project were Tom Rogers and Tom Vaughan. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc, MIfA). Robert Hedge (BA, MA) contributed the finds analysis.

#### 3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

#### 3.3 Fieldwork strategy

Four trenches amounting to just over 172.5m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated in the southern half of the total site area of 2.1 ha, representing a sample of 0.82%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. This was approved by Mike Glyde, Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment Planning Officer, in advance of fieldwork. Three trenches were specifically located to target closely spaced parallel linear anomalies identified by a geophysical survey. The fourth trench had to be moved due to overhead power cables and did not target any specific anomalies.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

Fieldwork was undertaken on the 14 and 15 July 2014. The site reference number and site code is WSM 57555.

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### **3.4 Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

### **3.5 Artefact methodology**

#### **3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard WA practice (2012; appendix 2). Pottery fabrics are referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the WA (Hurst 1994).

### **3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology**

#### **3.6.1 Sampling policy**

The sampling policy conformed to standard WA practice (2012). In the event no deposits were revealed which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

### **3.7 Statement of confidence in the methods and results**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

## **4 The application site**

### **4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context**

The site lies within a gently rolling landscape running down to the flood plain of the River Teme. Sitting on bedrock geology of Raglan Mudstone with deposits of alluvium the land use is largely small scale pasture land (BGS 2014). The historic town of Tenbury Wells is set within this landscape alongside the River Teme on a tongue of land prone to flooding.

Tenbury developed from a small post-Roman town with a large body of evidence for the medieval planned settlement but has seen little development over the last 100 years. The historic town core is surrounded by detached and semi-detached housing in sub-urban areas of modern expansion enclosed by large areas of field amalgamation and field reorganisation.

A geophysical survey was undertaken of the site in March 2014 (Stratascan 2014). This identified a low density of anomalies of potential archaeological interest, including a possible small square enclosure toward the south side of the site.

A possible medieval fishpond (WSM 41607) is located to the south-east of the study area which appears on the Tenbury tithe map of 1843. A number of 19<sup>th</sup> century out-farms and field barns (WSM 51410; WSM 51535) lie in the vicinity of the study site. There are also a number of sites relating to the defence of Worcestershire during the Second World War, including a Royal Observer Corp Post (WSM 31345) to the north and a Prisoner of War Camp to the east (WSM 27465).

### **4.2 Current land-use**

The site is currently undeveloped pasture.

## 5 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2 and 3. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

### 5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The underlying natural strata was a dark red Raglan mudstone with blue/grey clay lenses and mottling. Two irregular negative features (305 and 307) were interpreted as natural tree bowls in Trench 3 (Plate 3).

### 5.1.2 Phase 2: Post-medieval deposits

A number of stone-lined land drains (Plate 6) were encountered in Trenches 1 and 2. They contained ceramic and glass and are thought to date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### 5.1.3 Phase 3: modern deposits

In all four trenches (Plates 1 - 4) the natural strata was overlaid by a reddish silty clay subsoil, between 0.20m and 0.30m in depth. No finds were recovered from this deposit.

All four trenches were sealed by a mid-brown silty clay topsoil and grass turf, 0.25-0.35m in depth. No finds were recovered from this deposit.

### 5.1.4 Unphased deposits

A possible plough scar (405), aligned north-west to south-east, was noted in the south-east end of Trench 4. A naturally silted or backfilled depression (filled by 204 and 406) was also discovered in Trenches 2 and 4, running north-west to south-east, parallel to the existing south-western field boundary. It is thought to represent a former depression in the field, levelled at an unknown date.

## 5.2 Artefact analysis, by Robert Hedge

The only stratified finds from the site were recovered from context (205) and were all of post-medieval date, with the pottery sherds being little abraded:

- a single sherd of the base of a straight-sided green glass wine bottle, weighing 90g, is probably mid-to-late 18<sup>th</sup> century in date, although an early 19<sup>th</sup> century date is possible (Fletcher 1972);
- a single buff-ware body sherd weighing 44g came from an 18<sup>th</sup> century dish with trailed slip decoration (fabric 91), and;
- a rim sherd, weighing 52g, of an unusual wide-mouthed flanged bowl form of post-medieval red sandy ware (fabric 78.1), red-slipped and with a very dark brown, glossy glaze, its quality of finish suggests an 18<sup>th</sup> century date, although a late 17<sup>th</sup> century date could not be excluded. A similar form (Barker 1986, fig 8.78; Albion kiln site, Hanley) is dated to the mid-to-late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The finds are typical of domestic refuse, of probable 18<sup>th</sup> century date, their condition showing that they had been little disturbed since that period.

## 6 Synthesis

No significant archaeological deposits, structures or artefacts were revealed. The only features and deposits found were 18<sup>th</sup> century stone land drains, a backfilled or silted up natural depression, an undated plough scar and two tree root bowls. There was no evidence for the possible enclosure tentatively identified through geophysical survey. Some of the anomalies noted in the survey may relate to the plough scar observed in Trench 4 and the land drains in Trenches 1 and 2.



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## 7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting of land off Oldwood Road, Tenbury Well, Worcestershire ( SO 592 677; WSM 57555).*

*The site, currently a pasture field, lies to the south-west of Tenbury Wells, on high ground above the flood plain of the River Teme, with potential for prehistoric and later settlement activity due to its location on a gravel river terrace.*

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## 8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Cathy Patrick (CgMs Consulting) and Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

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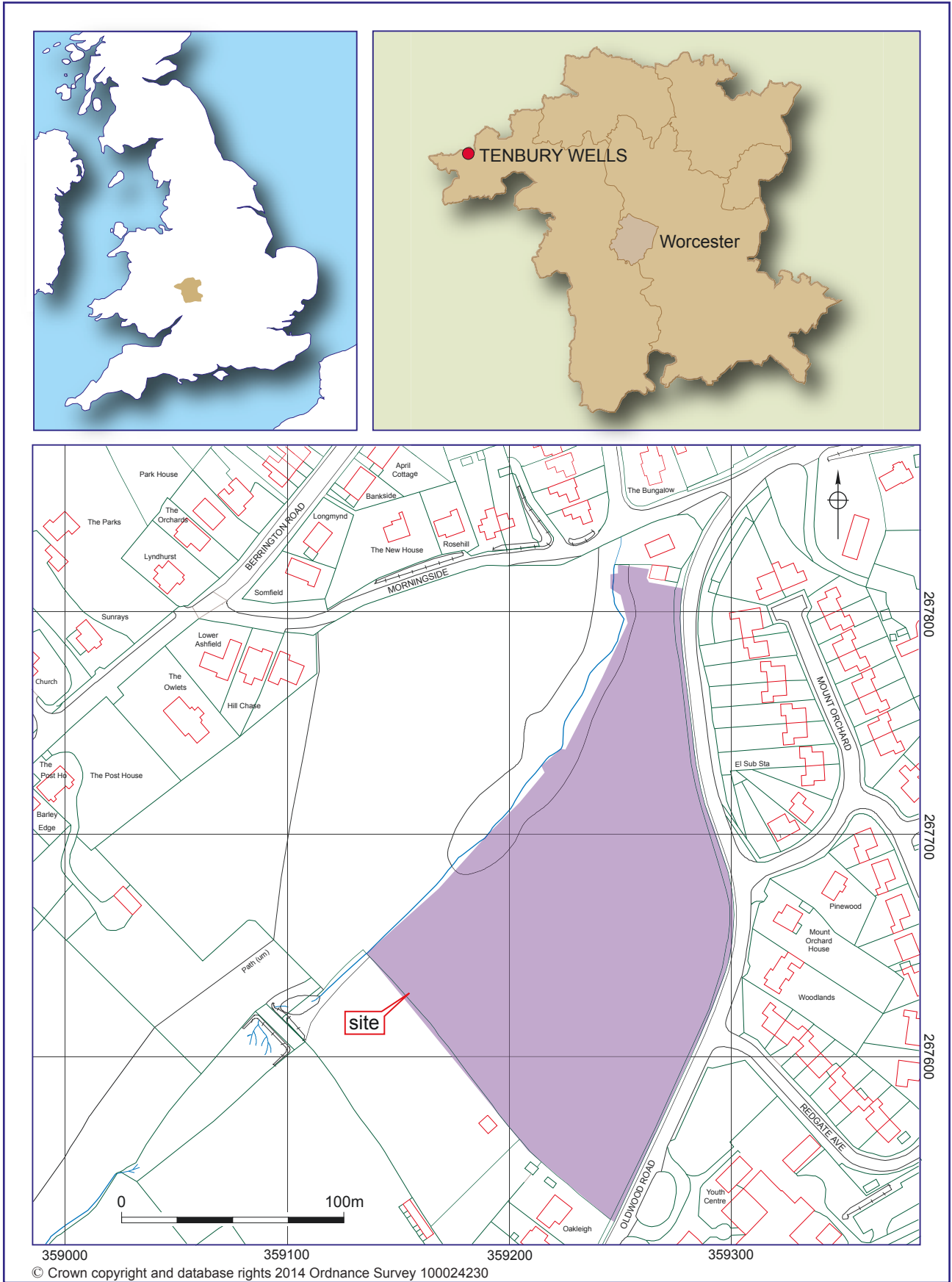
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WCC 2014 *Brief for archaeological evaluation*, Planning Advisory Section, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document

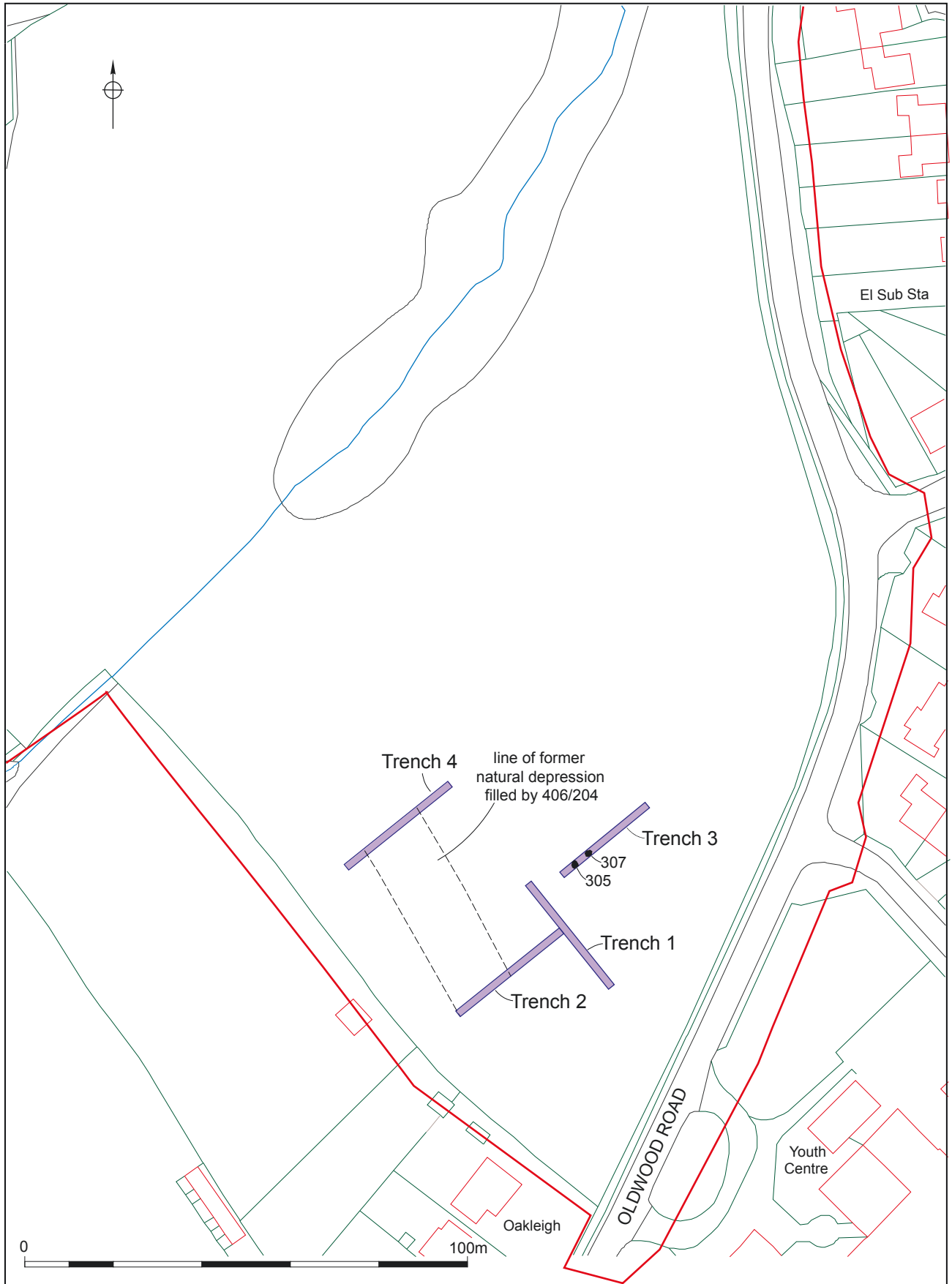


**Figures**



Location of the site

Figure 1

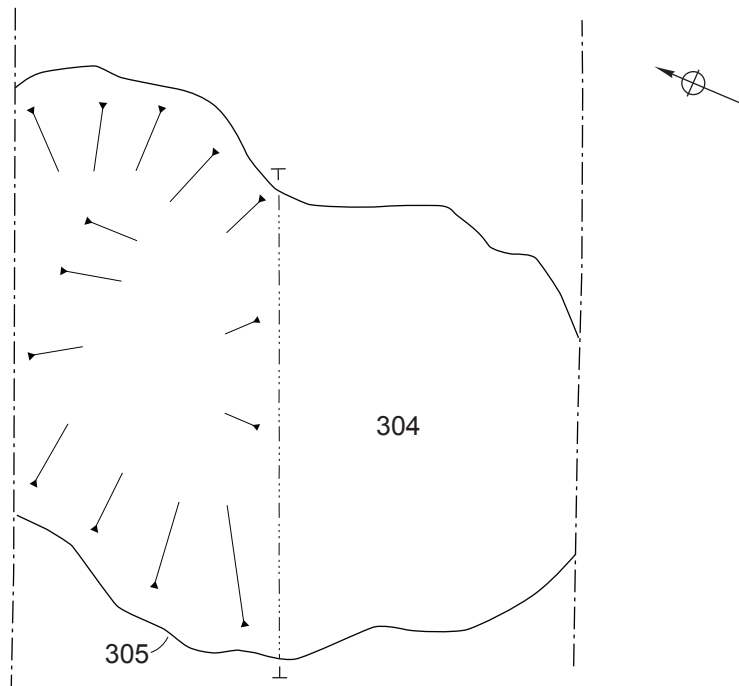


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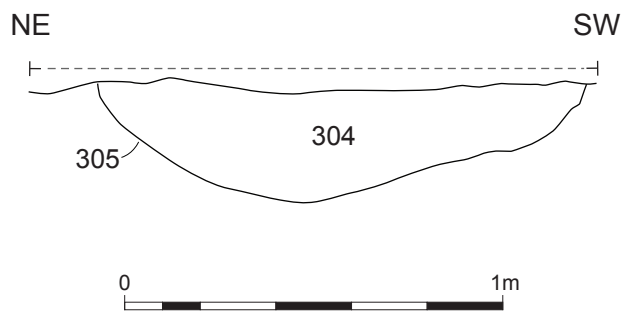
Trench location plan

Figure 2

PLAN OF 305



NW FACING SECTION OF 305



Plan and section of 305

Figure 3

**Plates**



*Plate 1 Trench 1, view south-east*



*Plate 2 Trench 2, view north-east*



*Plate 3 Trench 3, view north-east*



*Plate 4 Trench 4, view north-east*



*Plate 5 General view of site, view north down slope, towards Tenbury Wells*



*Plate 6 General shot of a stone-lined land drain*

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## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Main deposit descriptions

#### Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30m      Width: 1.5m      Depth: 0.45m-0.65m

Orientation:                      north-west to south-east

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
101	Topsoil	Loose mid-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and sub-rounded pebbles.	0m-0.35m
102	Subsoil	Firm reddish clay with occasional charcoal flecks.	0.35m-0.45m
103	Natural	Compact reddish pink clay with occasional blue/grey patches.	0.45m-0.65m

#### Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30m      Width: 1.5m      Depth: 0.45m-0.65m

Orientation:                      north-east to south-west

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
201	Topsoil	Loose mid-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and sub-rounded pebbles.	0m-0.25m
202	Subsoil	Firm reddish clay with occasional charcoal flecks.	0.25m-0.45m
203	Natural	Compact reddish pink clay with occasional blue/grey patches.	0.45m-0.65m
204	Deposit	Orange/brown compact clay with frequent manganese flecks. 0.40m in depth.	0.45m
205	Land drain	Land drain filled with sub-angular stones	0.45m
206	Land drain	Land drain filled with sub-angular stones	0.45m
207	Land drain	Land drain filled with sub-angular stones	0.45m

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**Trench 3**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 25m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.45m-0.65m

Orientation: north-east to south-west

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
301	Topsoil	Loose mid-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and sub-rounded pebbles.	0m-0.35m
302	Subsoil	Firm reddish clay with occasional charcoal flecks.	0.35m-0.45m
303	Natural	Compact reddish pink clay with occasional blue/grey patches.	0.45m-0.65m
304	Fill	Fill of tree bowl [305]. Firm brown silty clay with frequent charcoal flecks.	0.45m
305	Cut	Irregular shaped tree bowl feature.	0.45m
306	Fill	Fill of tree bowl [305]. Firm brown silty clay with frequent charcoal flecks.	0.45m
307	Cut	Irregular shaped tree bowl feature.	0.45m

**Trench 4**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.55m-0.75m

Orientation: north-east to south-west

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
401	Topsoil	Loose mid-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and sub-rounded pebbles.	0m-0.25m
402	Subsoil	Firm reddish clay with occasional charcoal flecks.	0.25m-0.50m
403	Natural	Compact reddish pink clay with occasional blue/grey patches.	0.55m-0.85m
404	Fill	Fill of [405]. Loose brown silty clay.	0.55m
405	Cut	Shallow cut for linear feature. Plough scarring.	0.55m
406	Deposit	Orange/brown compact clay with frequent manganese flecks. 0.40m in depth.	0.55m

## **Appendix 2 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code: WSM 57555)**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 28 Digital photographs
- 4 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum  
Museums Worcestershire  
Hartlebury Castle  
Hartlebury  
Near Kidderminster  
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ  
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

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